

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWER: Pat Young

INTERVIEWEE: Ben Montoya

SUBJECT:

DATE: December 12, 1979

TRANSCRIBER: Deborah M. Gill

Y: This is an interview with Mr. Ben Montoya at Mr. Montoya's home, 74011 San Morino Circle, in Palm Desert, on December 12, 1979, at 10:00 in the morning.

Mr. Montoya, please tell us a little bit about what you have been doing here in the valley and when you first came. Please go ahead.

M: Okay. I arrived in this valley in the year of 1923, February 14, and it was hot. If I would have had money to go back home, I would have went the next day. So, as soon as I got in, my cousin, a man by the name of George Gonzales, put me to work one hour after I arrived, burning grape prunings. We started burning grape prunings . . . in those days they did not have the variety of grapes we have now. They had the ~~Muligus~~ ^{Makagas}, which wasn't a very tasty grape, so they got rid of all of them, and then they brought in what varieties we have now--Thompson

✓ BCM

Seedless, which is one of the best in the valley, Cardinals,
^{Perlets}
~~B~~erlets. They have different varieties nowadays. But,
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that wasn't my work that I followed. I worked for my
cousin for twelve and a half days, then I went out and
looked for a job somewhere else. I was only sixteen
years old at the time, and I found me a job with a govern-
ment experimental station, there on Clinton Street in
Indio. I met a gentleman there by the name of A.J.
^{shamblin}
~~S~~hamblin, and he was tickled to death to find out that a
Mexican could speak English, because he was used to
handling nothing but Chihuahua men, who couldn't speak
English at all. So, like a gentleman, like I say, he
took his hat off and shook hands with me, and he gave me
a job. I stayed with that place for three solid years,
and it was a happy three years. I worked with a man by
the name of Roy Nixon making different kinds of experi-
ments on dates. We pollinated and made experiments with
the pollen, and we made experiments with the offshoots
too. One time we cut thirty offshoots and we put them
in a room with about 240 degrees of heat to find out if
they could survive that heat. Believe it or not, all of
them survived. We planted them later and they all made
good trees, after going through that harsh heat. So,
finally the day came when they gave me a vacation. They
told me I could take off two weeks and I could go home.
I had not seen my father and mother in that length of
time, three years. So, I went home and stayed there my

✓ Ben

two weeks, and I called young people. I met another boy that was working in Los Angeles and he told me "what are you doing there in that hell hole? It is so hot! Why don't you come to Los Angeles? I can get you a job over there." I believed him. When I came back, I worked with Mr. ^{Shamblin} Chamblin there in the station about a week, and I told him I was going to retire and go to Los Angeles and go to work. He told me "don't do it Ben. Stay here." Like a young fool I didn't take his advice, and I quit my job. Once you quit the government they never take you back. They only can use ninety days more after you quit. So, I went to Los Angeles and stayed over there for four months, and I found out that the city was not for me. I came back to the valley again, and that is the time I started working for Mr. ^{H.L. (Bert)} Cavanaugh. He used to be the manager and supervisor and everything there in the Cook Ranch. I learned a lot of things from him like cutting offshoots and ~~and~~ setting offshoots, and I learned that from Mr. Nixon too. I learned a little bit better from Mr. Cavanaugh because he used to do that as a business. I worked for Mr. Cavanaugh for a number of years, and during the Depression time when things were really hard. I farmed in his ranch. He gave me a piece of ground over there where I could raise tomatoes and onions, right where the ^{Erawan} Hotel is right now. I have pictures of my packing house, and my wife is packing tomatoes there. That year, I took sick, and I was working here in

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the home ranch of Mr. Cavanaugh, which is over here on Cook Street. I got a terrible pain in my stomach, and I had one of my sons, Richard, with me--he was only a young boy of about eight years ~~me--~~and he saw me take my hat off, and I put my hand right here, and I put my body in a berme to kind of kill the pain. When the pain went away, I was so weak that I just went to sleep. A little later Mr. Cavanaugh showed up and he said "what's the matter Ben? What is the matter? Get up." I told him "a pain hit me so hard and I don't know what it was." He said "you better go see the doctor. I think it is appendicitis." So, I stopped by and I told my wife who was packing tomatoes over there on the ranch--he used to call that ranch La Rocha--and I went to see Dr. Morris. He said "sure enough Ben, I have to operate on you right away, tomorrow morning." So, the next day they operated on me for appendix. In those days they used to keep you twelve days in the hospital, so when you got up you could hardly stand up, and you couldn't unbend. It was rough. So, I made it, and I came back again with Mr. Cavanaugh but he said "you are not going to work. You are going to be the foreman here now." I used to spend some time in Indio looking for help because everybody went to work for ~~Kim~~ Young, for the government during the War, see? Everybody left him. I was the only one to stay with Mr. Cavanaugh. So, I went to Indio and I found three families from Arizona and they all wanted to work. I said "I will give you a job and we will give you a place to

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✓ Ben

live, and will pay three dollars a day." They were tickled to death to get the job. I brought them over and I taught them how to climb the trees and taught them everything I knew about dates. They turned out to be very good people, very good hard working men. Mr. Cavanaugh was very happy with them. So then I told Mr. Cavanaugh "Mr. Cavanaugh, I am going to quit you again in six months. I am going to give you six months notice, and next April I am going to say good-by. I am going to go out on my own." So, he said "okay Ben." When the time was coming, he went over and saw my wife and tried to tell my wife to persuade me not to leave him, and to stay there on the job." She told him "he already made up his mind he is going to go on his own, and he can't change his mind. I can't make him change his mind." So, I did. I quit Mr. Cavanaugh and I went to work for Mr. Millers. He died awhile back. At the Simpson ranch we were thinning grapes. We used to get seventy-five cents an hour at the time. I worked there half a day, and Mr. Cavanaugh himself found me a good job. He sent a man to me by the name of Paul Kirsten. He went over there to where we were working, looking for me, and I said "here I am. What do you want?" He said "I want you to cut some offshoots for me and put them in my ranch, over that way, (in front of Eisenhower Medical Center). He used to own some property there. I said "how many acres do you want?" He said "I want twenty acres of

✓ BEN

dates." "Where are you going to get the offshoots?" He said "Mr. Cavanaugh will supply the offshoots." He will supply the tools for you to work with," because I didn't have any tools. So, I went over to Mr. Cavanaugh and he said "Ben, there is a sledge hammer, there is a chisel, shovels, everything." So, I took a brother of mine, my oldest brother, with me and we went to work and we put in the twenty acres of dates for Mr. Paul Kirsten. From there on in, all summer long, I spent setting date orchards, setting date orchards, all over. I finished one job and there was another one waiting for me. Since then, I have been on my own, until I started working for the *Shadow Mountain* Club in 1952. I was the superintendent over there. I made the big golf course that they have. So, I was there until 1959, with the *Shadow Mtn.* Club, and Mr. Staeger, who was the manager of the place--he and I never got along--got rough with me and I quit. I went home--I used to live on *Shadow Mountain* property--and they told me to get out, so I did. I started to get my things ready, when Mr. Cliff Henderson came over and said "Ben, I want you to work for me." I said "doing what?" "I want you to make that big golf course over here, you and ex-governor Waldron^{DN} from Washington state. He is going to be your boss." I said "all right, I will try and make it for you. I am going to have to get out of here first." "Well," he says, "go over there to my place. There are some apartments over there, so take them. Take as many as you want. So, I

C. Ben

took two apartments over there as they would be just right for my family and myself. I had three of my boys with me yet, because Ben was already at the academy--my oldest boy. So, I started working for the ~~Shadow Mtn~~ Club again, making the golf course, and I got that job completed in 1960. Then, that was enough for me so I put an application in to work for the College of the Desert. I happened to go to the office when they had it over here on Highway 111, and I met Dr. McCall there. An old friend of mine happened to be there, and he was going to run the college, and then he changed his mind, so that is when they brought Dr. McCall over. He filled in the application for me. I forget his name right . . . Mr. Braumwell. He was the one that did the filling out of the application for me, and then he introduced me to Dr. McCall and told him who I was. So, he said "as soon as we are ready to use you, we will let you know." On June 5 of 1962, I went to work for the college as a working man, and five months after that I was made supervisor and I held that job from that time until 1972, when I retired. Every tree that you see at the college now, the big ones, I supervised the job of putting them there--palm trees. The main orchard I put there for the original owner, Mr. Amos Odell, who used to own that property, and I put in twenty acres of dates for him, in 1944. I started to put in his vineyards too but I didn't have time so I put in another man to do the job, because I had other work to do. So, I am very proud of doing all that work

✓ Bcm

for the College of the Desert. I never got tired of working for that place. I had a superintendent by the name of ~~Butz~~ ^{Bud} Layton, and he and I got along pretty good. Well, really, I got along with everybody. I had a good time while I was working for the College of the Desert. That is the end of my story.

Y: I think that is a fair outline of your story. (laughter)
I have heard that you planted most of the trees in the area.

M: In this area here I did a lot of work for a fellow by the name of McIntyre, and I often wonder why didn't they name that Bob Hope Drive, McIntyre Drive? He was the original to start that vacinity over there.

Y: When you say "over there," where do you mean?

M: I mean over there by the Eisenhower Medical Center, and all that vacinity there. I think he was the first man to come over there and open up a date ranch. Then, I managed a ranch over there that used to belong to Mr.

~~Neins~~ ^{KNEENS} He died, and his ~~niece~~ ^{Wife} took over, and I was supervising her place, her date ranch and grapefruit ranch. I planted twenty acres of corn over there, which was the best corn I have ever raised in this valley. It was really beautiful corn. It gave me good production, and I sold it all to a fellow by the name of Kelly. My wife and other girls did all the corn packing, and I had boys from Mexico doing all the picking and the grading. I used to pack eight hundred crates a day, until we got through with it.

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I used to farm, and go out and set date orchards, from the old Zane Grey Ranch. At that time it was being run by a fellow by the name of . . . it has been so long that I forget their names. I think I took out of that place a little better than a thousand offshoots, and I put them in different parts of the valley. The funny part of that is this: that those trees over there, where the Zane Grey Ranch is, ~~are~~ located ⁱⁿ ~~on an~~ Oasis, which is a long way from here. Those trees were taken from the Cooke Ranch over there. A fellow by the name of Bud ~~Findler~~ ^{Swinder}, and his brother-in-law did all the work, and then I brought them over this way, years later. He had a beautiful ranch over there. They are all over the place, here in Palm Desert, and they came from over there--beautiful orchards.

Y: What kinds of dates?

M: ^{Deglet Noors} ~~Duglin~~ . I handled very few soft dates. The ones that I did handle went to the Imperial Valley and some went to Salt River Valley in Phoenix. Way back in the 1920s, we made a lot of ~~tamerex~~ ^{TAMERISK} cuttings. We used to pack them in burlap sacks and we shipped them all to Texas. I think they have the wind breaks over there took like we had here. I have experienced a lot of floodings in this valley since I have been here. Now, of course, they are worse now on account of all this building, but before the water used to spread out. They did not do so much damage as they do now. One night we were working very late trying to divert the water from coming through Cooke Street, and we diverted it

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to go east, and it made a big wash. It ruined the highway. That was a big rain that time.

Y: When was that?

M: Let's see if I can remember. I think it was in 1928. It was in the 1920s, but I don't remember exactly what year it was. In 1929 I was working for the Southern Pacific Restaurant. I worked there for about six months. I will show you. Come over here.

Y: I want to hear a little bit about when you were an instructor in agriculture at C.O.D.

M: Yes, I was. I got my degree from UCLA to instruct agriculture. I had a lot of Mexican boys from Mexico. It was a government program, or project, and I taught them how to grow vegetables, how to level a piece of ground, how to start working with a shovel. People think that just because it is a shovel, that anybody can handle it, but there is always a trick to handling a shovel. I had a little trouble with them in the beginning, but everything got to be all right, after I explained to them that it was a privilege to be learning what they were learning, at someone else's expense, and they were getting paid for it. So, when the program ended, three of them came over to my house here, to thank me for what I had done for them. There were three Mexican boys and two Anglos, and they came over here to thank me, for what I had done for them, and I am sorry to say that one of them really got to be way up there in agriculture, but he made one mistake. He

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accepted a job with a company from Honduras. He went to work in a banana plantation over there, and he married the daughter of a friend of mine, Mr. ~~Adyas~~ ^{ARIAS}, and he took her over there. He was a good looking boy, over six feet tall, and could speak Spanish fluently. He made the mistake of leaving the plantation one day, and went out with a native, to drink in their own little town there, and they killed him over there. He was a good boy. To this day I still remember him and the way he used to be. He was a very hard working kid. We all make mistakes, you know.

Y: The students that you were teaching, were they students that were going to C.O.D. at the time, or was it special?

M: They were going to C.O.D. to learn how to speak English. They had their course in the morning and I took them after the lunch hour. They did a lot of work over there. There is some of it still over there to be seen. I taught them how to landscape, how to level a piece of ground, and they did a very good job. We made a big green over there, and they helped me make that green, which is south of the tennis courts. There were several jobs they helped me make over there. They learned how to use the tractors, and all the machinery we had over there. Then, we put up a vegetable garden, and we raised everything. We raised carrots, we raised cabbage. I had a fellow by the name of Tony ^{Arce} ~~Arce~~, and Paul Kirsten helping, because Paul Kirsten was a good vegetable grower too. He used to have a packing

Ben.

house here in Indio. He was the son of the old Paul Kirsten. He was Paul Kirsten, Junior. We had a couple of acres to fool around with, and they did a terrific job, a beautiful job. The vegetables really produced very good. We had pink cabbage and white cabbage, and it came out real nice. We had lettuce which came out real good, and cauliflower. Everything produced right, and I even had a watermelon patch, until the kids from Indio found it out and they went over there and just destroyed it. You know, farming is a beautiful thing, and I love it.

Y: What did the Palm Desert area look like? I have heard that there were not many ranches around here in this vicinity, or there were not many date palms, or much of anything.

M: In 1923, there was just a very narrow road between Palm Springs and Indio. It was only big enough for two to meet on the highway, two cars, and you had to be very careful. You could even touch the mesquite plants, if you wanted to put your hand out. There used to be a lot of mesquite along here, between Indio and Palm Desert. In this area where we are right now, it used to be known as the Gillette Tract. There used to be a whole section of land which was one mile wide and one mile long, from ^{Deep} Big Canyon Road, clear up to Monterrey, from 111 to 44, owned by Mr. Gillette. It was all fenced in with this wire fence, and there was only one house, over here, the caretaker, and there was nothing growing here then at the time. Then, they put in, it wasn't a swimming pool, but was big enough to hold

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about ten thousand gallons of water. It was kind of a reservoir and had a nice big well, right there by the highway. We used to come at night and go swimming there. They used to come from Indio and they would pick me up and we used to go and swim there during the summertime. Then, they started bringing in offshoots from Indio, because he had some property over there too. ^{they} I put in a nursery here and a few ^{of} dates, and I put them in place, like an orchard. That was before the War, and in the 1930s a fellow by the name of Manuel Gomez and my brother-in-law, ~~Benaso~~ ^{IGNACIO} Ramirez, they were working for me at the time, and I had them dig up that nursery that they had here, so we could move them somewhere else. There is a story behind this, because Manuel Gomez was the first Mexican boy from Mexico to make an all-American football player here in California. He was attending Santa Clara University, and, as he was going to play in a bowl game in New Orleans, he got sick and could not make it. He was studying to be a lawyer, and later he became a corporation lawyer. Right now he is in Santa Clara and is a millionaire. I have seen him twice and talked to him twice over the phone, when I used to go to San Jose. He was a local boy from here. My brother-in-law, my wife's brother, he died. He went to the War and was wounded several times, and he died here from a little cut that he got in his toe. He wouldn't get killed in the War, but with a little cut he got here, in La Quinta, during a flood, he died out of that. Anything else you want to ask me?

Bem

Y: What happened between the time it was the Gillette Ranch here, and what we have today?

M: Oh, well, they turned it into a ranch. On the northwest corner, one year they grew a lot of cotton and a lot of vegetables, and that ground is so rich that the man who was growing vegetables could not even sell them all because they overgrew so big. He had bell peppers over there, and I am not kidding you, they used to be as big as a melon. He could not ~~keep~~^{ship} them because they were too big. They wouldn't have them over there because that is the lowest part of the whole valley right there, and when it rains over there, the water saddles right there, and enriched that ground there so much. The cotton used to grow about six feet tall. Everything they used to raise over there . . . onions the same way, they used to overgrow. Everything was big because that ground was so rich. There is still a friend of mine over there and he grows vegetables over there. He grows beets, which grow pretty big, and radishes, the same way. Everything he grows, they grow too big.

Y: That is over by Avenue 44?

M: That is over there by Avenue 44, and Monterey. My cousin used to raise cotton over there, George Gonzales, Jr. All this from Portola that way, they used to grow something in it, and from Portola this way, they used to have dates. Then they started putting dates in different places. Different owners used to start buying and started putting in dates and grapefruit. Finally, little by little . . . because, across the street during the War, there was nothing

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but brushed over there. There was nothing but mesquite and--I don't know the name of it--another weed, a smoke trees, and then, during the War, the thing was full of soldiers--all of that. There was nothing on this side, but everyone over there on that side. It was a kind of a depot. They had tanks, and the soldiers would put up cactus gardens, beautiful cactus gardens. I don't know where they got all of the cactus, but they really put them up. So, when they left, we went over there to see what they left, and we found a lot of tools, mechanics tools, and different things. A lot of us people went over there looking for things and we found a lot of things. They used to throw a lot of hams away, right over across the mountains, you know, when we couldn't buy them in town. They used to throw them away over there on the wash. Camp Young was over there and it was thriving. A lot of people were working over there and were making good money, and the ranches were having *Trouble*, that is when we started the program of bringing in Mexicans from Mexico because we were very poor in help. I happen to be one of the first ones to belong to that club. We got together with Mr. James Easely, who used to live here in Palm Desert. We got together over there in the water district in Coachella, and we ~~took~~ *talked* it over. We were going to send him to Washington to talk to some senators over there to see if we could get the Mexicans, and by golly, the program went through and we got them, we got the braceros. So, I spent two days

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in Mexicali, ^{checking} riding them out, and picking up certain people. Mr. Ripple, he was over there with me, and that day we sent in a thousand of them. People were really happy to have them because we needed them. Some of them made pretty good hands and some of them didn't. We sorted them over here, and the ones that didn't fit, we sent back and we got somebody else. So then, the San Joaquin Valley started to get them too. After we got through with them here, they would go over there, then they would come back again and work over here with us. It was a very good program. We should still have it yet because we still need them. We would not have all this trouble with illegals as we are having now, if we had that program. Lots of illegals are coming in, good ones and bad ones, but mostly bad ones. They are drug traffickers, men and women, and people are taking advantage of a lot of them because they are not legal. So, those things I have seen, and I have witnesses to ^{say} ~~see~~ that I am telling the truth. Right here in this Valley, I know of people that are taking advantage of those people. They don't pay them anything. I had one working for me, in this area. He was a good carpenter, a good gardener, and he did a lot of carpenter work around this area. His only trouble was that he liked to drink too much and I told him "quit drinking." He would not mind me, so finally the day came when they picked him up, after having a wreck with his car, and now he can't come back any more. If he does, they will put him in prison. So, he is working

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over there in Mexicali now as a carpenter. I hated to lose that man because I was helping a lot of people with him. He helped a lady over here and he did a beautiful job of . . . he made this gate for me. So you see, that is a good type of a man he was, and only drink spoiled him. He mended more gates over there for me, and, at ~~very~~, ~~you~~ ^{know}, five dollars an hour. He was happy, but bad habits may ruin a man.

Y: You have leased some land in La Quinta, I understand.

M: Yes, I was in La Quintas in the 1940s up until 1952 when I got out of there and came over to Palm Desert. I used to run all the land at La Quinta Hotel and used to take care of it. I used to take care of the land where the country club is right now, and the golf course. It used to belong to a man named Mr. Simon, from Chicago. I quit him when he told me to put a couple of big signs with flags on and with big letters so that the people who were landing there with ~~plans~~ ^{planes} not to land there any more. So one afternoon, kind of dark, a plane landed, and hit the wires, and he knocked the two big signs down. It is a good thing he never got hurt. So, he came from Chicago, and he told me "dig me a big ditch right in the middle across it," and I said "that is one thing I will never do. I don't want to be responsible for somebody getting killed," so that is when I quit him. I wouldn't do it. Then I worked for Mr. ^{Walter} here's something funny. The man who used to own the Grayson stores,-- I can't think of it now but it will come to me later--believe

Believe

it or not, that man bought some cattle, and he had a dairy right there by the Hotel La Quinta--something unheard of. He had some real beautiful cattle, all milk cows. Have you ever heard anything like that happening; a bunch of cows right next to a hotel? Well, he had it. I was working for him as his manager, in the ranch. I grew some tomatoes for him. Finally, he sold everything and he left, and I used to farm over there by Salton Sea. I had some squash and tomatoes over there. I was working for a man by the name of Cal Sides. He was the first commercial farmer to hit this valley. So, he was farming different ranches and I was his manager. That was in the 1940s. So, I had to run from Salton Sea clear up to this ranch here in front of the Erawan Hotel, on the left hand side, going east. I used to raise sweet potatoes there and tomatoes and dates on that ranch. It used to belong to a couple of doctors, Dr. Donahay and Dr. Joile. I could have bought half of that property only I was afraid. He would sell it to me very, very reasonably. If a man could only see what's coming ahead, I would have bought it, but I didn't. I had some property in Indio and he wanted that property, in exchange, and then so much money. But my wife said "no, what we own, we own now. Let's not take a chance on it because we might not be able to pay it." So, we didn't make an exchange.

Y: That says something about Indian Wells, then, that it didn't look like it certainly does now.

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M: No. Indian Wells used to be a little store over there, and a little school, right there where that artist lives now. There used to be a little greenhouse.

Y: What artist?

M: The one that paints pictures like that, on the right hand side. Sometimes you see him in there, you know? I forget his name

Y: Carl Bray?

M: Bray, yes, that's right. A schoolhouse used to be there. A brother-in-law of my wife used to go to school there, in the 1920s. And, I forget the name of the man that used to own that store. He was a big man and he used to use . . . what do you call this, that you put under here and walk with them?

Y: Crutches.

M: Crutches. He used to use crutches to walk with. He was a big man, and so heavy. He had a nice little grocery store there. I used to stop by and have a beer there once in awhile with him. And then, a fellow by the name of Dominguez bought him out and he made the store a little larger, and he had good business there. He was from Colorado. And then, all of a sudden, no more store--no nothing. A fellow by the name of, he used to own property in Africa, he bought that whole thing right there, that whole property. At one time they wanted to make the College of the Desert over there, but he would not sell them any property. That is where they wanted to make it, but then they bought this place

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over here instead. I forget the name of the man who used to own the property. He had a nightclub, or something over there somewhere in Africa. So this property, I don't know who owns it now, but they are going to make homes in there now.

Y: Is that near Indian Wells Hotel, that you are talking about?

M: Yes ~~name~~, before you get to the left entrance to go into Indian Wells. Right in there. I used to know the name of the owner. This side, a little bit this side, a man by the name of Frank Lawrence used to own that. I mean, his wife used to own it, but they separated and she stayed there and then married another younger fellow. It has been so long.

Y: So, that is where Carl Bray has his place now?

M: Yes. It is probably worth lots of money. She was a very good friend of mine, Mrs. Lawrence, but I forget her name. Frank is still living and he lives over there in Coachella somewhere. He used to be in the trucking business, but I don't know what he is doing nowadays. When Pearl Harbor happened, ^{was} I growing tomatoes here with Mr. Cavanaugh, and I came to see my tomatoes and on the way back I stopped there in Frank Lawrence's gas station and he was the first one to tell me, "have you heard about Pearl Harbor?" I said "no. What happened?" "Well, the Japanese are really raising heck over there, this morning." That was on the seventh day of December. To me it was something scary. I was never in the Army, only in the National Guard. Mr. Cavanaugh and I, we were in the California National Guard

Beam

together, and he bought my clothes. He was that good with me. No, I can never say enough good about that man. He used to come and visit me here, years ago.

Y: You were saying something about his business was offshoots. What did you mean by that?

M: Offshoots, that is an offshoot of a palm tree. It is the shoots that come from the bottom of the mother tree. They start little, and then they get big. You let them stay there for about five or six years, and then they are in shape to get them out. When you go to dig an offshoot, the whole mother tree is surrounded with offshoots. A big percentage of the mother trees get loaded with offshoots. You don't dare take them out all at once, even if they are big enough, because you weaken the tree so much that it is liable to fall. So, the first thing to do is to take half of them now, and half of them next year, and then, in the meantime, the tree gets leveled up with plenty of roots on this side, because every root is gone on this side. So, you leave half of them. Some people made the mistake of taking them all out, and that is why you ^{leave} ~~have~~ so many trees leaning so badly, because you take them all at once. So, Mr. Cavanaugh taught me that. We never took them out all at one time. We took one-third, or one-half, but never to go all around it. That tree would then grow more because it did not have to take care of those offshoots. It would grow a little better. So, the following year, you would take the other shoots from the other side.

Belna.

The subdivision over here, the Cooke and Mitchell subdivision, Mr. Cavanaugh was manager for Mr. Cooke at the time, when we started that subdivision. I was working there then, and we used to level two and a half acres at a time. There used to be different owners there. We would bring offshoots from the home ranch in a cart pulled by a couple of old mules. I wish I could find those pictures so I could show them to you. I looked for them yesterday and I couldn't find them. I took a picture of it. We got the wagon loaded with offshoots coming to the subdivision. I did not know Mr. Mitchell at the time, and it was already called the Cooke and Mitchell subdivision. Then, Mr. Cavanaugh quit Mr. Cooke for one reason or another, I don't know, and that left us without a boss. Mrs. Cooke was our boss then. Bill, her son, was attending Stanford University at the time, so she made him quit the college, the university, and come and run the ranch, so Bill was our boss when he came back. So, we knew what to do and he didn't have any trouble with us--my brother, my brother-in-law and myself. When we needed help, we hired it, especially during offshoot season. I have a picture of all those boys that used to help me dig those shoots out, and I am the only one alive of that bunch. They are all gone. I got two Anglo boys in that picture, big tall fellows, nice hard working boys, but they are gone. ^{Salvador} ~~Selva~~ Mapula, he is gone. The man that made the adobes for that house of Mr. Cavanaugh, that first one that he made, he made those adobes

Beam

too.

Y: What was his name?

M: His name was ~~Ciyatano~~ ^{Cayetano}. I forget his last name. His name was ~~Ciyatano~~ ^{Cayetano}, and he was a hard working man. I had him digging the offshoots and I was doing the cutting, and we would bring them over here. 1925, it was easy for a lot of Mexicans to come across the border and come over here and work. They having trouble in Mexico, religious trouble. They were all Catholic people, so they decided to leave Mexico and come to the United States so that they could work here, the way they wanted to work, because in Mexico they were having trouble with the Catholic religion. President ~~Cayas~~ ^{Calles} was the president at the time, so, we got some real good men. There is one here yet that never went back to Mexico. He is the only one that stayed here. The other ones went back after things got better in Mexico. Mr. Cavanaugh had one by the name of Juan Garcia, and that man adored Mr. Cavanaugh because he was so good to him. He would work day and night for him. Do you know, he leveled ground at night with a pair of mules? That man was tireless. I have a picture of him. I saw him yesterday. I took a picture of him as he was moving the branches of the tomato plants to show me the big tomatoes he had on the plants. That is when we had tomatoes over here on the ranch. He left this country when the war started because he was afraid to be drafted, so he went to Mexico. He got married over there and he produced fifteen children. Those fifteen

Bobm.

children were in this room one day. The place was loaded. He and his wife, she was a young lady, an American, born here only she happened to be in Mexico at the time. Juan married her and she bore him fifteen children, girls and boys, nice looking, and he brought them all here so they could learn the English language. Mr. Cavanaugh used to go to his place in ~~Sagateca~~ ^{SACATECAS}, because he had a good ranch over there. He went over there twice, I think. Mr. Cavanaugh used to like that man a lot because he worked very hard for Mr. Cavanaugh because he used to like him a lot. There are very few people like him.

Y: Who is the one who ended up staying in the States?

M: A fellow by the name of ^{Wich} he owns some property in Indio. Dog gone it. I forget. He owns some houses there on Town Avenue and he worked for Massey, Rock and ^{Sand} Central many years, and is on a pension now. I can't think of his name right now. His face is all poc marked. I haven't seen him in quite a while. I don't have anything to do with him, so that is why I can't remember his name right now.

Y: Did he also work for Mr. Cooke?

M: No. He never worked for Mr. Cooke. He used to work in Indio for a Dr. ^{Carreion} what is the name of that Mexican doctor? He used to own the property where that hospital is right now. Carreon, Dr. Carreon. That is who he used to work for.

Y: When you had appendicitis, is that where you went?

M: No, I went to Dr. Morris. He was my doctor for thirty-five

Bohm

years. He brought all my children into this world. He got into this valley the same year I married my wife, in 1933. The first time we met him was when my wife was barefooted, and she stuck a sliver in one of her feet, so I had to bring her to the doctor to get the sliver out. It was a big sliver, you know, and she cried because the doctor didn't put anything to kill the pain. She was crying that day until he finally pulled it out, and when I saw that thing, it was that long, so it was no wonder she cried. (laughter) He was our doctor from there on in. My first boy, Ben, was born in our house. They did not have a hospital at the time. Then, all the rest of them were born in the hospital. That's Ben, that's Richard, and that's Arthur--the one that is in the post office--and here is Jimmy who is in the insurance business, and that is me. ^{Dick} He is in the trucking business and ~~Ben~~ ^{Ben} he will become a lawyer in May of next year. He is going to Georgetown University.

Y: That is wonderful.

M: I took that picture of myself in 1929. A young girl in Indio by the name of Olga Abrahms made a couple of nice looking shirts for me and I had my picture taken with those shirts. They had black edging and then my initials. They used to own a store in Indio.

Y: Where did Dr. Morris take you when you had your appendix removed.

M: He had a hospital then. He had that hospital in Indio.

Bohm

A doctor by the name of Blackman, he put up a little hospital he used to have in Indio. It was just a house. But, Dr. Morris, when he made that hospital, he really made a beautiful thing. He kept adding to it, and adding to it, and finally he had a big hospital, but, he died. He had cancer. Lots of people used to like him a lot because he was a very good doctor.

Y: Did you ever work around Rancho Mirage?

M: Oh yes, I did a lot of offshoot work over there. I managed one ranch over there, Mrs. ^{Keens} ~~Nins~~ ranch, until she sold out to some fellows from Oakland who were very good friends of Senator ^{Knowland} ~~Nolen~~, if you remember Senator ^{Knowland} ~~Nolen~~. They were very good friends to him. They used to be boat makers in Oakland--I forget their names right now--and they used to mention Senator ^{Knowland} ~~Nolen~~ a lot because he was from Oakland too. Then, when they took over, I quit them. I didn't want to stay there any more because they could take care of their job and that place. I don't know how long they kept it, then they sold it. Mrs. ^{Keens} ~~Nins~~, she used to keep in touch with me. She lived in Santa Monica and her husband was a contractor in Santa Monica. ^{I think he build} ~~all the sidewalks in Santa Monica~~ all the sidewalks in Santa Monica when he was living over there, cause, when I went over there to Santa Monica to see her, I could see all the sidewalks had his name in all the corners, engraved, you know? Made by ^{Keens} ~~Nins~~. Made by ~~Nins~~. So, he was a cement contractor. He was a big fellow. They were accusing Mrs. ~~Nins~~ that she had poisoned him, and

Beem.

a man that I knew signed the affidavit. So, they were going to exhume his body to find out whether he had died of poison. So, she came to me, when I was living in La Quinta, and she says "Ben, will you please help me on this?" She had an FBI man with her, a big fellow. "Let's go to this man's house, the one that signed this letter." It was made by Jim Walton claiming that she had killed her husband. "Let's go to his house and ask him if he knew what he was signing." So, I took her over there where this man lived, and Mrs. ^{Keens} ~~Nin~~ stayed hidden so that he would not see her, and that way he would come out and tell me the truth. I asked him, I said "look, do you know what it says in this letter?" He said "no, because I don't know how to read." "Then, how come you signed it if you don't know how to read?" "Well, the fellow that brought it to me, my boss, he told me to sign it so I put my name in there." Then, I told him what the letter said and he said "no, I didn't sign that." "Well, your name is there. How can you tell whether she did it nor not? You don't live with her in the house. Did you go to Mrs. ^{Keens} ~~Nin~~'s house?" "No, I never went to her house at all." So then, I called Mrs. ^{Keens} ~~Nin~~ and she came over and I explained to her what he had just told me and she said to me "well, why did you do it?"--I forget ^{Emilio Contreras} his name. He is dead now.--"Well," he said, "I just signed it because my boss told me to sign it." The FBI man was there taking notes and he said "I could send you to San Quentin because you signed something here that you did not

Boon.

know anything about, and I was going to be crucified on account of you signing this letter." He said "well, I signed it without knowing what I was signing." Jimmy, in the meantime, had left. He went to Arkansas to hide out, so I don't know what they did to Jim. I know the last time I heard about him he was living in La Quinta, but I don't know nothing about him any more. So then, she was saved. This man that she brought over, he took all the notes, and they did not take his body out so that left the whole thing like that. She inherited all his property. He had beautiful property there, but it is full of homes now.

Y: Where is it?

M: Right there on Clancy Lane going east from Bob Hope Drive.

It is about the second ranch from Bob Hope Drive, on the right-hand side. It used to be called the Ranchos ^{escondido} ~~Candido~~.

It was a beautiful place, with plenty of acreage. It is all full of homes now. I went by there the other day to go see that church where they teach a lot of kids, you know, and I happened to see it over there, full of homes.

Y: The nature of the valley. (laughter)

M: Oh, they are ruining the valley all right with many homes.

By golly, enough is enough! To me, it is a ruination. I don't know what other people think. I love the desert here, but things have really changed a lot.

Y: Speaking of that, what happened with the Cooke house?

M: The original one over here?

Y: Yes.

Belm

M: They just tore it down. It was a frame house, a big, two-story house, with a big garage, and they just tore it down. I don't know who bought it. Bud ^{SW} Findler, he used to take care of the dates there, but then he gave that up and went to something else. I don't know who bought the place. I think Mr. ^{swingle} Single bought the place. That is when the house was torn down. I use to live there.

Y: In that house?

M: No, right close to the house, where the pump is right now. There is a pump there, you know, you can still see a water tank. We used to have a two-story house there where Mr. Cavanaugh used to live, and when Mr. Cavanaugh moved from there to his house then we moved over here to where Mr. Cavanaugh used to live. But at first, we used to live over there right in front of Mr. Ripple's. On the right hand side there is a date store, and we use to live across from him. We had another frame house there too, two of them. They use to call that place the Calizona--California and Arizona--because they used to raise one type of date which was no good. It was a Saidy, and those were the hardest offshoots to cut. Man, they were hard to cut. I shipped a lot of those shoots to Arizona and to Imperial Valley to see if they would do any good over there. They are still growing them in Arizona and in Imperial Valley because they can stand a lot of humidity, but over here they were no good at all. Those were hard things to cut.

Y: Where the Teamsters built, there was an older adobe in there.

Beom

Do you know anything about that? Did you ever work that property?

M: Which place?

Y: Where the Teamsters have been building. You know, right along 111, just east of Cooke Street. There used to be old iron gates out there, going down on the left side.

M: Oh, yes. A fellow by the name of Carpenter opened up that land. I have a picture of that too, only I can't find it. I have a picture of that peak over there when I took a picture of myself. I am in shorts with boots on, and my men are there with me. I had a truck loaded with offshoots, and when they took the picture of us, they took a picture of that peak, Eisenhower Peak. It is a pretty picture. We had just gotten through cutting offshoots in that place, and we parked the truck in the driveway, on the little road that is left there yet. That ranch was bought by the name of Arkell, who came from Cuba. He made his fortune in Mexico, then he moved to Cuba and he formed the Beechnut Company over there, and he had a railroad over there too, in Cuba. Then he sold out, and he came over and bought this property and named it La ~~Pinka~~ ^{FINCA} Esperanza. He made a nice home on top of a hill with a swimming pool. I was in that house many times cause him and I got along real good, and so did Mr. Cavanaugh. I put nearly all the offshoots in there. In fact, I gave him a couple of male offshoots that were given to me in Indio, and they were big already. So, I hired a man by the name of . . . he was Art Cavanaugh's . . .

Stepfather

Boem.

that was a different Cavanaugh. Now, I am talking about Art Cavanaugh now. Art Cavanaugh used to be the manager of that place. He was not related to Mr. H.L. Cavanaugh at all. He was the manager over there, and his step-father had the equipment to move those trees. So, I dug the trees out in Indio, and I had them moved over here to Mr. Arkell. I just gave them to him. He named one tree after me, and he called it the Ben tree, right there by his house. The other ones we had put in another place. He had a son, and, like all fathers, when we only have one son, we spoil them. He was a spoiled brat, let's put it that way. He let him buy an airplane and he used to fly between here and Blythe. He used to ^{go} to the Colorado River. One of these times he wrecked and killed himself, and that kind of killed Mr. Arkell too, because he did not last long after that, and died. He was a heck of a nice fellow. He could speak Spanish so fluently. So, then she was left alone, Mrs. Arkell. Mr. Carpenter died too at that time, so the whole ranch was gone.

Y: You were talking about raising vegetables various places. Did you raise the vegetables for the individuals who owned the land, or did they let you have the land and you sold them?

M: No. Mr. ^{Cal. Sides} ~~Kelsides~~ used to get the owners to give so much money so he could use their property . . . and everything that we made out of there went to the owner. They paid all the expenses. That is what you call commercial farming.

Belm

That is what they are doing nowadays, lots of them.

Like this fellow that lives over here, on the other side of the mountain, he is a Frenchman.

Y: What is his name?

M: Dupont. He is cousin of mine through marriage because he married one of my nieces. He called me one day over there so I could tell him how we were connected together, because he wanted me to find him some offshoots. I did find him some, and he is in that business now.

Y: Where is this located?

M: His office is right there as you pass the pass over here.

Y: Washington Street?

M: Yes. You get on Washington Street and go to your right, and you find a big, nice gate there, a wrought iron gate. His name is there, and that gate opens with electricity. You go in there, you ask for him, and he has a beautiful office over there, a ~~beautiful office~~. By the way, I saw the birth of that ranch. My brother, Art, worked on that ranch when they were knocking out all the mesquite, clearing the land, and my cousin, George Gonzales, sent two Fresnos--a Fresno is a piece of equipment that we used to use to level ground with. We used to use four mules to pull it, and they used to level that by hand, see? He did all the leveling. Then, Mr. Apolpca, he was a carpenter, and he made all the structures in there to house horses, all the stables and corrals. We did not know what kind of horses he was going to have, until one day, on a Sunday,

Boem

Mr. Clark asked us if we wanted to do something for him, and he would pay us good. I said "sure we will," and he took us to the depot in Indio and there were twelve beautiful animals from Arabia, Arabian horses. So, they got them off of the car, railroad car, got them on the ground, and we walked them all the way to the ranch. I still remember one of the names of the horses. His name was Shydon, and he was a beautiful animal, a sorrel. He had some mares, and some studs, and a pony, a baby. So, we walked them all the way from Indio, the whole bunch of us guys, and we had a horse a piece, and everything was ready for the horses. Then, he brought a couple of German trainers--they were about four feet tall--to train those horses. It is too bad he didn't last long, Mr. Clark didn't, but, before he died, he donated all those horses to the college in Pomona, to the Kellog Ranch, so they took them over there, all of them. Then, she died, Mrs. Clark, and she left all her wealth to the couple of colleges over there in the same vicinity. I forget the name of the college. I used to know the names. They sold the place here to different people and it is not the same place as it used to be. It used to be the number one date producer of the valley, bar none. They used to grow the best looking ~~Deglednors~~ *deglet Noors* of any rancher, inch and one-half long. They were beautiful dates because they used to put everything into those trees that they needed--water, plenty of fertilizer, loving care. She had good men working. There were nothing but ~~Deglednors~~ *Deglet Noors*.

BoM

And, talk about rattlesnakes! That place was loaded with rattlesnakes. This place was loaded with rattlesnakes at one time, this place right here, and right there at the Cooke and Mitchell Subdivision. I killed many snakes there five feet long. I got used to it. You hear that whirl, and it makes you feel so bad. No, this place was loaded with rattlesnakes, and now they^{one} gone. They don't like to be around people, you know. We invaded their country, so they had to go away. What we did not kill, they just went away. Lots of people used to eat them. The ones that ate them claimed they were better than fish meat. I knew some that ate them. I never did taste them or nothing, but I did smell them when they were cooking them. No, we used to have a snake here in this valley and we used to call it the red racer, because she was so fast. She could climb a tree in no time at all. I had a man working for me, his name was ^{Rafino} ~~Rafucio~~. He would get a snake like that and wrap it around his belly. He would keep his shirt on and the snake would be inside of him. She wouldn't bite or anything. She was just a pet. They were red, alright, and they used to call them red racers. Finally, they disappeared too, like everything else. No, in those days this valley . . . oh, I know about another man, a fellow by the name of Mr. Burns, and he used to own a Ford garage in Indio. He used to make a trip from the Thunderbird Country Club--he used to own all that property there--every day, and used to go to his garage in Indio, he

Ben.

and his wife both. She used to work for Mr. Cooke as a secretary, in the Cal Date packing house. I put a lot of trees for him in his place over there, for Mrs. Lake, and her ranch used to be called El Rancho ~~El La Flaugos~~ *de los lagos*. Her name was Mrs. Lake and she was from New York. And then a teacher, Miss Thompson, she bought ten acres from Mr. Burns, and I filled them up with dates too. She had two daughters and she used to teach there at the Coachella Valley High School. Bud Swindler and I were setting offshoots right there where the Thunderbird Country Club is right now, one night at nine o'clock, and we were putting in trees. We had the lights of the cars and trucks on when we were doing the work, because we wanted to get that job done that night. The next year they took them all out. That place did not belong to the Thunderbird yet, but belonged to Mr. Burns, but he sold the property and the next year they took them all out. Mr. Burns did not last long after that. He owned thirty acres over here too, and when he sold everything over there, he moved over here.

Y: Where?

M: Right across from the Cooke and ~~Mission~~ *Mitchel* Subdivision, straight across, toward the mountains--thirty acres.

Y: Where exactly was the Cooke and Mitchell Subdivision?

M: It's right there. From here you go to the Big Canyon Road, and right next to it is the Cooke and Mitchell Subdivision. There is a piece of acreage there that was never used and is still empty, like it has been all the

DDm

time, but everything else was filled up with date trees. Mr. Cavanaugh started it, and I finished it. I haven't told you the good part of it yet. Now, when we got to Avenue 44, the last acreage that I put in there--cause I used to put the stakes, 30 by 30, over there, 30 by 28, 30 by 28--when I got to the road, I didn't have enough room to make a straight line. So, what I did was make the last row straight, but the next row, I had to rob it, so it was narrower, not 28 feet at all. You could still see it before they knocked them out, but they already knocked them out so you can't see it now. We got through with the subdivision, finally, then Mr. Cooke opened up his own property across the street, and he told me, in 1932, he said "Ben, I will not be able to pay you over here, what I used to pay you on the Cooke and ^{Mitchell} Mission Subdivision. You are going to have to work for three dollars a day on the side." "Mr. Cooke," I said, "if you cannot pay me the same, because the work is going to be the same thing" I sunk that offshoot chisel right there and I left it there, and I went to San Francisco. So, I didn't do any work on that side of the street. I never put a single offshoot. My brother did it. My brother Art worked for Mr. Cooke for thirty years, and for about ten years I kept after my brother to quit him, to get out of there. I said "as long as you work for Mr. Cooke you will never amount to nothing," but he wouldn't do it. He was very loyal to him. The house is still there where my brother used to live, and the house

Ben.

that Mr. Cooke made, out of adobe, is still there too. He made that house himself. But, I didn't work for Mr. Cooke any more.

Y: You mean Mr. Cooke made that adobe?

M: He made that adobe house over there. Have you ever seen it?

Y: I am not sure. I am not sure which one it is.

M: It is the one right there. You turn around there to go to the church, right? Well, it is the house to the right. It is adobe, and he made that house himself. He was already married to his first wife, a schoolteacher, and he went over there and made that house himself. My brother lived a little farther ^{from} him, and had a frame house over there. He worked for him for ^{30 yrs} finally, I got my brother out of there. In the next two years he was able to buy a home and still owns the home over here. He went and got a job as a gardener, and he is still a gardener, so he made a better living. Cooke was a very good man, but, I don't know, he didn't believe in paying much money to the working man.

Y: Did he own Cal Date?

M: No, he did not own it. It was owned by different growers. It was a kind of a corporation. His father, Caleb Cooke, used to be the president, and he was the first man to open that place up and the last man to leave in the evening. So, one time he left and he never came back. They found him dead the next morning. He was fumigating the dates,

Beem,

and they think he did not get out of the room fast enough when he opened up the can of gas, and was overcome, and they found his body there. He was a real fine gentleman, a very good man, but that was the end of Mr. Cooke.

Y: So it was William Cooke that your brother worked for.

M: Yes, Bill Cooke. His father's name was Caleb Cooke, and then he had another brother by the name of Robert, who had nothing to do with the ranch at all. He was a quiet boy. He had a sister. They left to Santa Ana and I never saw them any more. I never saw Mrs. Cooke, or the daughter, or Robert any more. Bill was the only one that remained here.

Y: You were talking about Point Happy with the Clark Ranch. When did your brothers start working on that?

M: In 1923. He got here in April 1923, two months after I got here, and that is the first job he had. He was clearing up the mesquite, he and a whole bunch of men, and burning it up. They were doing pretty good, until one day he stepped on a bunch of ashes he thought were already out, and he burned his heel very badly, so he was out of work for quite awhile until his heel got well. Then, he got a job with Mr. Cooke. My cousin found him this job over here in the ranch, so he came over to work for Mr. Cooke, and then he sent for his family, his wife and his two boys, because he had a home to live in over here and a place for his family. He brought them over from Las Cruces, New Mexico--that is where we came from--and he lived happily

Beam.

ever after there with Mr. Cooke, for thirty years he stayed there with him. Yes, Art enjoyed his life there very much, working for Mr. Cooke, and then for Bill. He worked thirty years, until I got him out of there, otherwise he would still be there, I guess.

Y: Did you ever work around the airport and Rancho Mirage?

M: No, I never did. There was no airport then, at the time, and it used to belong to Mr. Gogerty. There was no airport there at the time. When I was working for Mrs. ~~Nins~~ *Kern*, that was as close as I got to Mr. Gogerty, on this side of the wash. So, there was no airport at that time. That used to be nothing but wild country there, and finally he started making a few homes in there. He had a whole bunch of colored people working for him. That is all he had, nothing but colored people. Mr. Paul Kirsten, he owned that property over there, eighty acres. He had grapes and dates.

Y: Where is this?

M: That is over there on Country Club Drive, and then, Bob Hope Drive. Right in the very corner--there is a stop sign there now--but right in the corner, on the northwest, that used to belong to him.

Y: Where the Springs are now?

M: Where the Springs are now. Mr. Schuman bought that from him for a million dollars, in 1960. Mr. Kirsten recommended Mr. Schuman to hire me to take care of the place for him, when he sold it to him. So, Mr. Schuman got in touch with

Ben.

me, and I went to work for Mr. Schuman for six months. He took me out of the ranch and took me to his hotel in Palm Springs, and I was his manager over there for the golf course. After six months I was fired, so I went to the office in Indio to get some unemployment, and they ask you questions there, see?

Palm.

MONTROYA II

41

Side 3 of 3:

M: said, "Well, we going to keep that ground settled down." I said, "Well, there's other things you can do with the ground." "For example," he says, "what?" "You can grow alfalfa. And you make money, too."

: Of course they do.

M: And they'd let me do it, so we leveled the ground up. I wish I could remember the name of the professor that did the engineering for me. He was the first one ~~weah~~ we had there then. I got a letter from him, but I wish I could get that letter up. He wrote a nice letter to me. He used to be the agricultural professor.

: Yes, I know him. I knew him very well. In fact, I sold his house for him.

M: He sent me a beautiful letter thanking me for allhhe learned from me. I forget. He went to Sacramento.

: Yes, he did.

M: That's where he went. And he's the one that did the engineering for me. He set the stakes and all that, you know.

;

M: Yes. I forget his name. I wish I could find that letter. I'll show you that letter. He left me a beautiful letter.

: I've got maps in the office with his name on it.

M: He had a son. He sent him to the Marines.

: Yes.

M: Yes. He made a good man out of him. Yes, he worked for me, too, that kid did. He was a talkative kid, but he was a good worker. Yes, and they put the alfalfa. Now they, and I used to raise that alfalfa and I used to mow it and bail it, everything. The moment I left, they hired somebody to come and cut and bail it, and they paid him more money than they make. I usually used my own men to pick it up, too. We used to take it in and put it in the stack, then we would sell it. We had buyers from all over. We made, golly, we made money out of it.

: Are you talking about snakes awhile ago. I remember when they were fixing the land to put the College of the Desert on there, all those big high bamboo fences all around. That's where they got the snakes. (laughter)
By golly!

M: Mr. O'Dell put that bamboo there.

: Oh, did he?

M: As windbreaks, see. Then I put Charlie Cribble with a caterpillar to dig them all out. See, he had them all over the date orchard. And then over there by Monterey.

: Yes.

M: Those . . .

: But the runners from Bamboo, they just go anyplace.

M: Oh, yes. Those trees, silver dollar eucalyptus, I put those trees there. I ordered them and I put them there, the ones that we have there on the edge of the date orchard.

: Are they there still?

M: Oh, yes, on the west side, still there.

: Pretty big by now.

M: Oh, they're big, yes. Yes, when they took that off just off of that orchard they didn't take care of it like I tell you. That's why a lot of trees are leaning over the place.

Y: Is that a producing orchard?

M: It is a producing orchard, yes. Cal-Date takes care of it. Right now they would give those people, a lot of people ready to buy the, I mean, buy the production of those trees, rent them out, but Cal-Date has got it. Tenaco is Cal-Date now. Teaaco owns it now.

Y: What's Tenaco?

M: You ask me something I cannot answer, just a corporation, so I don't know. It's a big union outfit.

Y: Oh, I see. You were talking about when an earlier one in the twenties, something called one that was taking over a lot. You said it was down in the valley, maybe Indio way, or

M: Taking what?

Y: No, no, no. I know. It was these two fellows. When we were looking at the photograph, you said those two fellows left Cavanagh and went to work for someone else.

M: Oh, hh. That was Ramondo and Susanno.

Y: Yes. Who did they go to work for?

M: For the government, in Camp Young over there.

Y: Camp Young. That was it. What is Camp Young?

M: Camp Young, that was a military base, military camp where they were training soldiers. It was a training camp.

Y: Oh.

M: We had the same thing here, only this was a depot where they had all the fighting equipment.

: Where was this Camp Young?

M: It's over there going towards Blythe, up on top of the mountains over there, on top of that mesa. And they used to go from Indio, and they used to get a dollar seventy-five an hour.

: And the local one here was, what was this?

M: This one here? I don't know the name of it, but General Patton, he was the head man. He was the head man. I knew him. He used to come to church on Sundays. Couple of pearl-handled guns with him. He was a big man. Yes, he was quite a guy. And he was the head man. And the soldiers over here were nothing but taking care of the equipment.

: They were all over.

M: But over there they used to train a lot. They trained here in the desert to go and fight the Germans. And they took them to the South Sea Islands. (laughter) Yes, I happen to know one of them. They went to MacArthur instead.

: Oh, they did?

M: Yes, all of these guys went to MacArthur.

: Oh, I thought that most of these fellows that were trained here went to Palestine.

M: No, her brother, he went through all those campaigns in North Africa and Sicily, and he was wounded three or four times.

: Your wife's brother?

M: Yes. One time he was left for dead. They put him with the dead people. And finally they saw him move, and they

got him out. He lost a kidney that time.

Y: Just one last question. You were talking about the fact when the twenties when you were working around Indian Wells area that you would go down to Indio. Were most of the people at that point young people living in Indio area? Were there none around here?

M: In Indio area at the time, the majority of the people, Mexican people, were from Chihuahua, the majority of them. There ~~were~~ very few American citizens at the time. And Indio was known as a railroad town then. There used to be a lot of men who used to work on freight trains. They used to live right there in Indio. It was a round house, Indio, round house. That's what it ~~was~~.

Y: Round?

M: Yes, we used to have a round house where they used to fix the engines and all that, see. And they used to fix the machinery. They used to work a lot of people, local people were the ones who worked in the round house. But the ones from Chihuahua, they used to work on the ranches. They were all from Chihuahua at that time. Hardly very few from southern Mexico. My cousin, he was from Chihuahua. He was one of the rich Mexicans that were in the valley at that time, George Gonzales. And there's very little

that they have written about him even as a successful farmer as he was. But he didn't leave nothing behind. He got killed in an accident. He was killed in an automobile accident. I happened to be working in Los Angeles at the time, 1939, when I met his brother, Manuel. He came over to me and said, "My brother was killed this morning." I said, "How did he get killed?" And he told me in a car accident. He hit a truck from behind right in West Covina. That was in 1939. I was working over there managing a tomato packing house. I was getting tomatoes from Santa Maria at the time. And tomatoes ~~were~~ were only three dollars and three and a half a box.

Y: Well!

M: That's the only time I ever left the valley, that year. From that time I've been here all the time, 1939. It got real rough here.

Y: What do you mean, it got real rough?

M: Work was very scarce. At one time they chased all the Filipinos away from this valley. One night they rounded them all up and away they go. Every Filipino that we had in the valley was chased out of here. Same as Imperial Valley.

Y: Why?

M: They didn't want them because they were competing against the local people. They used to come from up north, see.

To work in the grapes. To prune grapes and to pick grapes and all that. They didn't want them. Local people. So they chased them all out.

F: Oh, that's because it was scarce then.

M: Yes.

Y: Because you were saying later then it became difficult to find work.

M: No, no, yes, but during depression time. That's when that happened. No, I tell you, it was hard here during depression time. It was rough. But the people that had a steady job, it was good. I got married in thirty-three, and I had a good job. I used to work for a company, MitchWhittier Company. Bob Bollin, he was a good man. He got killed in a car accident here last year.

Y: Is the experimental date station still going?

M: Yes, but they don't have any more dates, nothing but citrus. Dr. he used to be the man in charge there, but I don't know whether he is now or not.

Y: Well, I think . . .

END OF INTERVIEW